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III. UNFPA COUNTRY PROGRAMMES

Request for additional resources for the country programme for Namibia

1. Numerous delegations supported the request for additional resources for the UNFPA country programme for Namibia. Two delegations, however, noted that the funds requested represented a substantial increase over the original amount approved. One delegation, noting that the supplementary resources were being requested for many of the activities that had been part of the country programme approved by the Governing Council at its thirty-ninth session (1992), asked if poor planning and financial mismanagement had contributed to the low implementation of those activities. The other observed that Namibia was not a priority country for UNFPA assistance. He therefore suggested that UNFPA might need to review its criteria for priority countries and/or consider whether Namibia should be a priority country. A third delegation commented on the need to build national capacity and asked that UNFPA give consideration to that need.

2. The representative of Namibia expressed his country's gratitude to UNFPA for its support. Although Namibia was not a priority country for UNFPA assistance, the population of the country was growing at a rapid pace. He said that the objectives of the programme remained valid. He identified adolescent pregnancy and gender insensitivities as major concerns of the Government and stressed the importance of information, education and communication (IEC) activities in that regard. He observed that population factors were integral components of development and noted that his Government was moving towards elaborating a population policy.

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3. The Director of the Africa Division thanked delegations for their support. She noted that the funding level requested for the original country programme had been conservative because Namibia was not a priority country and because the absorptive capacity of the new nation had not yet been demonstrated. She stressed, however, that its needs in the area of population warranted the level of UNFPA assistance requested. Although Namibia had a relatively high per capita income, she observed that a highly skewed income distribution was concealed behind the apparent wealth, with a large majority of the people receiving only a small percentage of the gross domestic product (GDP). She emphasized that the Government was strongly committed to the acceleration of the population programme and that programme implementation was better than anticipated, both substantively and financially - 77 per cent of the approved funds had been expended during the first three years of the programme. Supplementary funds were needed to strengthen the national reproductive health and family planning programme; initiate IEC and gender, population and development activities; formulate a national population policy; develop human resources; and build national capacity.

4. The Deputy Executive Director (Programme) pointed out that the request for additional resources was in keeping with the recommendations of the mid-term review of the country programme and that Namibia seemed an ideal candidate for UNFPA assistance in view of the Executive Board's emphasis on the need to increase resources to the Africa region. Moreover, Namibia clearly needed and wanted UNFPA support and had the capacity to spend effectively the funds allocated to it.

5. The Executive Board approved the request for additional funding authority for the UNFPA country programme for Namibia as contained in document DP/1995/28.